

The Pruiett Family Part 1

In the narrative that follows, the various spellings of Pruiett reflect differences in the source documents. The family name was spelled "Pruitt" by four generations, from the first Samuel Pruitt around 1700 to Asa Prewitt/Pruitt in the early 1800s. During the 1800s, very few in the family could read or write. This explains the many different spellings of the name during this period including Prewitt, Prewett, Pruit, Pruitt, Pruet and Pruett. Family members signed many of their documents by making an X. Beginning around 1870, the family was spelling the name "Pruett" on a fairly consistent basis as demonstrated on the marriage license of Asa W. Pruett and Alice Climer dated Dec. 31, 1891. In the early 1900s, however, the family changed the spelling to its current form. Charles Pruiett's 1905 report card is the oldest surviving document that uses the spelling "Pruiett." William E. Pruiett's 1915 Indiana marriage license also uses the current spelling. Although the 1910 U.S. census record had the old spelling of "Pruett," both Asa's and William's 1920 U.S. census records have the current spelling.

In 1924 William Ellis Pruiett received a letter from W. M. Tredway, a Chatham, Va. attorney, in which he discussed the various spellings of the family name. In his letter to the attorney, William Pruiett had spelled his name "Pruiett" and the attorney responded that he could not find that spelling in any of the family records he found. Despite this news, William Pruiett decided that going forward, the family would spell the name "Pruiett." William's father, Acy Pruiett, died in 1924. On his death certificate the name was spelled "Pruiett" although in a couple of places the "i" was inserted as a correction.

Our first confirmed Pruiett ancestor was Samuel Pruitt who was born around 1700. Some sources give Samuel Pruitt's birth year as 1684 (apparently based on an extrapolation of his birth year based on the false belief that his first son, Samuel, Jr., was born in 1705). Most sources, however, indicate that he was born on April 4, 1700 in Prince George's Co., Md. We have not seen a primary record that confirms the date and place of Samuel Pruitt's birth (however, see below for a possible birth record). At this time, the names of the parents of Samuel Pruitt are not known. Some sources indicate his father was John Pruitt who was born in England in 1658 and his mother was Sarah Lessene who was born in England in 1662. Other sources indicate that John Pruitt and Sarah Lessene were born in Virginia, even that John Pruitt was born on Tangier Island. The Tangier Island connection is highly doubtful since the first confirmed settlement of Tangier Island was by Joseph Crockett and his family in 1778. It appears that the first Pruitt to inhabit Tangier Island arrived in the late 1700s, after Joseph Crockett. However, we have no historical evidence that John Pruitt and Sarah Lessene were Samuel Pruitt's parents. There were several Pruitt families in Virginia in the late 1600s and it is not clear how to sort out the various relationships, although we are making some progress using Y-DNA analysis. Many Pruitt researchers trace their lineages back to Thomas Prewitt (The Immigrant) who was said to have

Letter from Attorney W. M. Tredway, Jr. to William Ellis Pruiett February 18, 1924

arrived in Virginia in 1636 as an indentured servant to Joanne Bennett. Some indicate that Samuel Pruitt was the son of John Pruitt and Sarah Lessene with John being the son of Thomas Prewitt. We do not know much about Thomas Prewitt. We do not know if he was really an indentured servant or whether he knew Joanne Bennett. What we know is that Joanne Bennett used his and other headrights to claim land in 1636 in an area that later became York Co., Va. If you transported someone to the colonies or paid for their transportation, you received a headright to obtain 50 acres of land. This was common in colonial America and did not necessarily mean that the person transported was an indentured servant or that the person claiming the headright was the original possessor of that headright. We also can't be sure that Thomas Prewitt arrived in America in 1636; he could have arrived years earlier and could have been a child when he arrived. Regardless, there

are no records we can find that clearly identify the parents, wife or children of Thomas Prewitt. Some researchers may have counted backwards 20 years from Thomas's presumed arrival date and linked him to a Thomas who was born in Salisbury, England in 1616. There is a record of a Thomas Wiett christening at St. Edmunds, Salisbury, Wiltshire County, England on May 25, 1616. Some have speculated that this record was misread as Thomas Pielt and became Thomas's link to England. Just to add one more wrinkle, there is a record of a Samuell Prewtt/Prentt born in Northumberland Co., Va. to Rosamond on Feb. 1, 1700. This is intriguing because of John Hawker's early connection to Northumberland County and subsequent migration across the Potomac River to St. Mary's Co., Md. and then Prince George's Co., Md. (see Hawker for more). It may be that Samuel Pruitt followed that same migratory route, arriving in Prince George's County in the early 1700s where he married John Hawker's granddaughter, Elizabeth Hawker in 1720. For a more thorough analysis of the possible connection of this birth to our Pruiett line and our probable connection to another immigrant family, see The Swenys of the Tidewater region of Virginia.

Elizabeth Hawker was born on Dec. 14, 1701 in Prince George's Co., Md. She was the daughter of Robert Hocker and Amy Selby. For more on the Hocker/Hawker lineage, see the Hawker family. Prince George's Co., Md., which was created in 1696, encompassed an area that included the present day counties of Montgomery, Frederick and Prince George's and the District of Columbia. In 1748 Frederick County split off from Prince George's County and encompassed all of western Maryland including present day Montgomery County and the northwestern part of the District of Columbia. In 1776 Montgomery County was carved out of the southeastern portion of Frederick County. While the narrative that follows describes events that occurred in both Prince George's County and Frederick County, the actual location of these events was in present day Montgomery County and the northwestern part of the District of Columbia.

It's commonly believed that Samuel Pruitt and Elizabeth Hawker were married in 1720; however, there is no known historical record to confirm the date. There are several variations of the names of the children born to Samuel and Elizabeth Pruitt. This area needs more investigation, but here is a list that makes the most sense based on historical records:

Priscilla Pruitt, b. 1721 in Prince George's Co., Md., m. William Duvall of Duvall Forrest, Md. on Oct. 20, 1745 in Prince George's Co., Md., d. ~1798.

Margaret Pruitt, b. 1724 in Prince George's Co., Md., m. Philip Hawker in 1744 in Prince George's Co., Md., d. 1791 in Montgomery Co., Md.

Sarah Pruitt, b. 1726 in Prince George's Co., Md., m. David Boydston in 1752 in Frederick Co., Md.

Samuel Pruitt, b. 1730 in Prince George's Co., Md., m. Lucy Owen in 1754 in Frederick Co., Md., d. 1801 in Pittsylvania Co., Va.

Zachariah Pruitt, b. 1734 in Prince George's Co., Md., resided in Halifax/Pittsylvania Co., Va. John

Pruitt, b. 1736 in Prince George's Co., Md., resided in Halifax/Pittsylvania Co., Va., d. after 1800.

Mary Pruitt, b. Jan. 21, 1742 in Prince George's Co., Md., m. James Boydston, d. May 22, 1809.

The Pruitts did not leave much of a footprint in Maryland records in the early to mid-1700s. No Pruitt marriage records have appeared so far, except for Priscilla Pruitt's marriage to William Duvall (see this 1940 transcription of the Rock Creek parish church record). The only other records uncovered so far are the 1733 List of Taxables below and Samuel Pruitt's lease agreement, last will and accounting documents on Pruiett, Part 2. With this in mind, there is a question that's been raised by some researchers as to whether Margaret Pruitt exists and whether she or a Margaret Snowden married Philip Hocker. Since no marriage record has been found, we have to rely on Philip Hocker's last will and a deed recorded in Frederick Co., Md. to make a subjective determination. The primary (and perhaps only) argument in favor of Philip Hocker marrying a Margaret Snowden is the fact that he left his son, Nicholas Hocker/Hawker, more than one hundred acres of a tract of land called Snowden's Manner [Manor] Enlarged. We believe researchers originally deduced that his wife must have been a Snowden for him to possess this tract. Now we know that he bought the land from Thomas, Samuel and John Snowden in 1769. While this removes the principle argument in favor of

marrying a Snowden, it does not prove that Margaret Pruitt was his wife. Some researchers have indicated that Philip Hocker's son, Samuel, was named Samuel Pruitt Hocker, but we have not found a record that substantiates this claim. At this time, we believe the weight of evidence points away from Philip Hocker marrying a Margaret Snowden, and we have tentatively determined that the evidence points towards Margaret Pruitt. As always, this kind of determination is subject to change as more evidence comes to light. Certainly, the geographic proximity of the two families, as the record below suggests, makes a Hocker-Pruitt union a plausible presumption.

The 1733 List of Taxables taken by Charles Perry, constable for Rock Creek Hundred in Prince George's Co., Md. showed:

Samuel Pruitt 1

Nicholas Hawkes [Hawker] 2

Philip Hawkes [Hawker]

Nicholas Hawker was Elizabeth (Hawker) Pruitt's uncle.